



Canadian Red Cross  
Quebec Division

# ENSEMBLE

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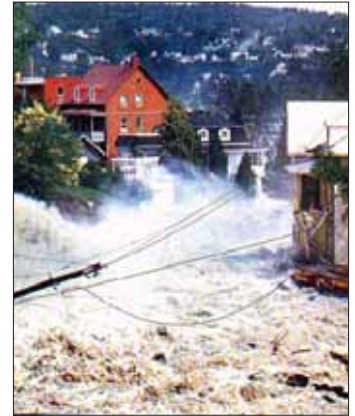
RED CROSS NEWSLETTER

## A WAVE OF GENEROSITY RUSHED OVER QUEBEC 10 Years After the Saguenay Flood

At 2:30 a.m., on the morning of July 20, 1996, a flood prompted one of the largest evacuation operations in Quebec's history. In the course of just a few hours, a heavy downpour hit north-eastern Quebec and caused substantial flooding in the Saguenay region as well as Charlevoix and the Côte-Nord.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Saguenay flood, the Red Cross has drawn up a report of its activities relating to the event that will remain forever engraved on the collective memory of all Quebecers. This operation is one of the largest in the history of the Canadian Red Cross. Since 1996, 1,700 volunteers have provided Red Cross assistance to 18,880 people. The assistance program was carried out in six phases, all complementary to the assistance provided by the Quebec Government.

The generosity of donors from Quebec, Canada and elsewhere in the world enabled the Red Cross to give 27 million dollars to the affected population. Although relief operations are now over, the Red Cross continues to provide assistance to three families who are still dealing with the aftermath of the floods. Residents of Canton-Tremblay, in Saguenay, whose homes are at risk from landslides, also benefited from Red Cross assistance through the *fonds du Don de la solidarité* in collaboration with the City of Saguenay. The fund's balance, \$935,000, is now available for the victims of future disasters in the Saguenay region or elsewhere in Quebec.



### Never Before Seen Deployment

As soon as the emergency operation was launched, the Red Cross' main task was to coordinate activities at several different sites, by sending equipment and volunteers to the zones affected by the disaster. At the same time, the Chicoutimi office was busy offering services including the registration of disaster victims. As early as Sunday morning, helpers were arriving in the Saguenay, from all over Quebec, to lend a hand to their colleagues in the area. We already knew we were facing a disaster of uncommon proportions.

## Expertise from our Sister Societies

Our main concern, 10 years ago, was to introduce assistance guidelines specifically adapted to the situation. As disasters on this scale are practically unheard of in Canada, we called upon the expertise of our sister societies from the Red Cross international network who are frequently confronted with nature's hazards. We took our lead from processes already in effect in other countries, while making sure to adapt them to the specific needs of those affected by disaster in Quebec. The very first phase of the response was inspired by international and American standards and drew on elements of Quebec's own "Disaster Services" program.



## The Different Phases

### PHASE 1: EMERGENCY PHASE

Meet disaster victims' immediate needs: food, clothing, hygiene kits, cleaning products, lodging, household items, health care and work.

### PHASE 2: DISASTER VICTIMS EVACUATED FOR MORE THAN 14 DAYS

Meet disaster victims' medium-term needs: personal needs, need for household supplies, health care needs, needs relating to work.

### PHASE 3: RECONSTRUCTION

Main residence damaged or destroyed and disaster victims still evacuated and waiting for Phase 4.

### PHASE 3A: RECONSTRUCTION

Assistance program for those affected by the disaster whose main residence has been destroyed or damaged, who are still evacuated and an assistance program for entrepreneurs, notably independent workers, business owners and farmers who are not in operation.

### PHASE 4: ASSISTANCE BASED ON THE PERCENTAGE OF DAMAGES

Assessment of needs for owners, tenants and business owners whose main residence has been damaged or destroyed.

### PHASE 5: COMMERCIAL PHASE

Commercial phase enabling workers to keep their jobs.

### PHASE 6: SECOND RESIDENCES

Program for the owners of damaged or destroyed second residences.





## At the Heart of the Tragedy: Those Affected by the Disaster

It is hard to believe that 10 years have passed since the summer of 1996. Images of the Saguenay flood were seen around the world and this tragedy is still viewed as one of the worst ever to occur in Canada. Beyond the scale of the event and the media attention it received, at the heart of this tragedy we find the people affected by it. They are the ones for whom the Canadian Red Cross set up one of the largest relief operations in its history.

At the request of local authorities and the Quebec Government, the Red Cross was mobilized in the very first hours after the flood to provide the necessary human resources not only for disaster services but also to raise funds. Therefore, the *Don de la solidarité* fund was created. Everyone was moved by the plight of the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean population. The generosity of Canadians and of donors from around the world complemented that of the people of Quebec. In total, 29 million dollars were raised. An advisory committee was established, under the presidency of Monseigneur Jean-Guy Couture, to ensure effective management of the fund.

Therefore, we must pay tribute to those affected by the disaster and to the entire population, as well as to the Red Cross volunteers and employees who rolled up their sleeves together and faced the challenge. We must also recognize the generosity of all the donors to the *Don de la solidarité* fund, an enterprise never before seen in Quebec or anywhere else.



The experience of the flood demonstrated that the authorities would never have been able to financially and logistically shoulder such a network of support.

With the perspective of an increase in the number of disasters caused by climate change and the risk of a possible pandemic, the Red Cross will face new challenges. Therefore, continuous support is required of the population in order to support the network of Red Cross volunteers as auxiliaries to public authority.

We saw proof at the time of the flood: the Red Cross volunteer force will always be ready to help those affected by disaster.

**Conrad Sauvé**

*General Manager – Canadian Red Cross, Quebec Division*

## Mobilization at its Finest

We don't usually celebrate unfortunate events like those surrounding the Saguenay flood. Rather, we commemorate the courage of those affected by the disaster and the exceptional work of volunteers and staff. Ten years after the major operation set forth by the Red Cross, the time is right for such retrospection.

Faced with a disaster as huge as it was unexpected, we cannot ignore the exemplary speed with which Red Cross volunteers took up the challenge. While long-time volunteers trained rookies, local businesses released employees in order for them to join Red Cross relief efforts. Nearly 1,700 people were mobilized: in fact, some of them are still part of our volunteer force!

This solidarity movement, one of the largest ever at the Canadian Red Cross, is proof positive of the community spirit within us all. Every action made the burden a little easier to bear for those affected by the disaster. This is the very purpose of the Red Cross: lightening the load for those whose lives have been turned upside down in the blink of an eye.



**Mario Dionne**

*President, Canadian Red Cross, Quebec Division Council*





